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ABSTRACT

New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) conducted a statewide telephone survey of 531 randomly selected kindergarten through fourth-grade public school teachers to obtain information on how schools prevent and address reading problems. Results indicated that (1) 95% of respondents said remediation should begin at grade 1 or earlier, but less than half of the respondents in New York City reported that intervention and remediation actually begins at grade 1 or earlier; (2) students in kindergarten through grade 4 spend an average of 68 minutes each day in formal reading instruction; (3) 94% of respondents said there should be specific indicators of what students are expected to learn in reading at their grade level, but 40% report that their school or district has not established such indicators; (4) 28% of respondents indicated there was not a coordinated reading program at their school; (5) only 10% reported that there was a reading test or assessment that a student must pass to be promoted into their grade level; (6) statewide, grade 1-4 teachers report that 33% of their students were reading below grade level; (7) statewide, 22% of grade 1-4 students who were reading below grade level had English as a second language; (8) statewide, 24% of respondents did not have the assistance of a reading specialist; (9) factors critical in helping all students learn to read that were identified by two-thirds or more of all teacher respondents were early intervention, parent involvement, and reduced class size; and (10) statewide, respondents had an average of 20 credit hours of undergraduate or graduate college courses in the teaching of reading. (RS)

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# *Highlights of the NYSUT Telephone Survey of Elementary Teachers on Reading*

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*NYSUT Division of Research and Educational Services*
*May 1997*

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## *Highlights of the NYSUT Telephone Survey of Elementary Teachers on Reading*

NYSUT conducted a statewide telephone survey of 531 randomly selected kindergarten through fourth-grade public school teachers.

The purpose of the survey was to obtain information on how schools prevent and address reading problems, and to collect data that would help determine what school districts must do to meet higher reading standards being proposed by the State Education Department.

The survey was designed to be representative at the state level. When data from subgroups smaller than "Entire State" are displayed (e.g., for grade level, New York City, Rest of State), it is important to keep in mind that, because of the small sample size in each of these subgroups, the data are descriptive of the teachers interviewed and cannot be inferred to that subgroup's population.

## EARLIEST GRADE FOR REMEDIATION AND INTERVENTION

Statewide, 95% of respondents say remediation should begin at grade 1 or earlier. (93% in New York City; 96% in Rest of State)

In both remediation and intervention, there are startling contrasts between New York City and Rest of State –

Teachers interviewed in New York City report that remediation begins later – only 48% of teacher respondents in New York City report remediation begins at grade 1 or earlier, compared to 84% in Rest of State.

Teachers interviewed in New York City report that reading intervention *also* begins later – only 41% of respondents in New York City report intervention begins at grade 1 or earlier, compared to 75% in Rest of State.

**Figure 1**

| Question: | Grade | Entire State | New York City | Rest Of State |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| What is the earliest grade level at which your school generally provides students with remedial reading instruction in the form of additional assistance from a reading specialist? | K | 10% | 1% | 15% |
| | 1 | 61% | 47% | 69% |
| | 2 | 16% | 25% | 11% |
| | 3 | 7% | 14% | 3% |
| | 4 | 0% | 1% | 0% |

**Figure 2**

| Question: | Grade | Entire State | New York City | Rest Of State |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| In your professional opinion, at what grade level should this remedial reading instruction begin? | P | 2% | 1% | 2% |
| | K | 32% | 22% | 37% |
| | 1 | 61% | 70% | 57% |
| | 2 | 3% | 5% | 2% |
| | 3 | 1% | 1% | 1% |
| | 4 | 0% | 0% | 0% |

**Figure 3**

| Question: | Grade | Entire State | New York City | Rest Of State |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| What is the earliest grade level at which your school provides reading intervention? (prevention) | P | 1% | 0% | 1% |
| | K | 16% | 4% | 22% |
| | 1 | 47% | 37% | 52% |
| | 2 | 10% | 19% | 5% |
| | 3 | 8% | 14% | 4% |

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## TIME SPENT IN FORMAL READING INSTRUCTION

***How much time do your students spend each day in formal reading instruction?***

Statewide, students in kindergarten through grade 4 spend an *average* of 68 minutes each day in formal reading instruction.

Statewide, the *median* for kindergarten through grade 4 is 60 minutes each day.

Among teachers interviewed, there is little difference between New York City and Rest of State on this item.

Figure 4

| Question: How much time do your students spend each day in formal reading instruction? | Entire State | New York City | Rest Of State |
|---|---|---|---|
| Average in minutes | 68 | 69 | 67 |
| Median in minutes | 60 | 60 | 60 |

*By Grade Level*

Among teachers interviewed, the most time spent on formal reading instruction is in the first grade (average of 80 minutes daily, median of 90 minutes daily) and the number of minutes drops off gradually from grade 1 to grade 4.

The lower numbers reported for kindergarten may indicate that at this age, more time is spent in readiness activities and in enjoyment of literature rather than in "formal" reading instruction.

Figure 5

| Question: How much time do your students spend each day in formal reading instruction? | K | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Average number of minutes | 52 | 80 | 74 | 66 | 65 |
| Median in minutes | 45 | 90 | 60 | 60 | 60 |

## SPECIFIC READING SKILL INDICATORS

Statewide, 94% of all respondents said there should be specific indicators that make it clear what students are expected to learn in reading at their grade level; however, 40% report that their school or district has not established such indicators.

Among teachers interviewed, there is little difference here between New York City and Rest of State on this item.

Statewide, over half (57%) of respondents say their school or district has established specific indicators at their grade level.

**Figure 6**

| | | Entire State | New York City | Rest Of State |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Question:** Do you think there should be specific indicators that make it clear what students are expected to learn in reading at your grade level? | Yes | 94% | 92% | 95% |
| | No | 6% | 7% | 5% |
| **Question:** Has your school or district established these specific indicators for reading at your grade level? | Yes | 57% | 49% | 61% |
| | No | 40% | 45% | 37% |

*By Grade Level*

Among teachers interviewed, a large majority of teachers at *each* grade level (K-4), feel there should be specific indicators for reading at their grade level.

Over half of the respondents at each grade level indicate their school or district has established these indicators at their grade level.

**Figure 7**

| | | K | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Question:** Do you think there should be specific indicators that make it clear what students are expected to learn in reading at your grade level? | Yes | 86% | 96% | 92% | 98% | 96% |
| **Question:** Has your school or district *established* these specific indicators for reading at your grade level? | Yes | 61% | 56% | 54% | 59% | 55% |



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## CONSISTENCY IN READING PROGRAMS

Statewide, 28% indicate there is not a coordinated reading program at their school that is sequential from grade to grade.

| Figure 8 | | Entire State | New York City | Rest Of State |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Question:** Is the reading program at your school coordinated so that it is sequential from grade to grade? | Yes | 70% | 61% | 75% |
| | No | 28% | 36% | 24% |

*By Grade Level*

Among teachers interviewed, within-grade consistency drops in grade 3. Less coordination and sequencing of the program are reported by third grade teachers. See Figure 9.

| Figure 9 | | K | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Question:** Is the reading program at your school coordinated so that it is sequential from grade to grade? | Yes | 67% | 72% | 72% | 68% | 72% |

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## READING TESTS OR ASSESSMENTS REQUIRED FOR PROMOTION

The survey asked respondents questions that dealt with reading tests or assessments that students MUST PASS in order to be promoted.

***Is there a reading test or reading assessment that a student MUST PASS in order to be promoted into your grade level?***

***Do you think there should be a reading test or reading assessment that a student MUST PASS at your grade level before being promoted to the next grade level?***

Statewide, only 10% report there is a reading test or reading assessment that a student MUST PASS in order to be promoted into their grade level. Among teachers interviewed, this is more common in New York City than in Rest of State.

**Figure 10**

| | | Entire State | New York City | Rest Of State |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Question:** Is there a reading test or reading assessment that a student MUST PASS in order to be promoted into your grade level? | Yes | 10% | 16% | 7% |
| | No | 76% | 61% | 85% |

*By Grade Level:*

Among teachers interviewed, this reading "entrance standard" is applied more often with advancement of grade level. At grades 2, 3 and 4 this "entrance standard" is reported by 12%, 12%, and 22% of respondents, respectively. See Figure 11.

**Figure 11**

| | | K | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Question:** Is there a reading test or reading assessment that a student MUST PASS in order to be promoted into your grade level? | Yes | 3% | 4% | 12% | 12% | 22% |
| | No | 43% | 86% | 88% | 86% | 78% |
| | Not Applicable | 54% | | | | |



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***Question:***
***Do you think there should be a reading test or reading assessment that a student MUST PASS at <u>your</u> grade level before being promoted to the <u>next</u> grade level?***

Statewide, the majority of teacher respondents (58%) favor a reading "exit standard" for students leaving their grade level.

**Figure 12**

| | | Entire State | New York City | Rest Of State |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Question:** | | | | |
| Do you think there should be a reading test or reading assessment that a student MUST PASS at your grade level before being promoted to the next grade level? | Yes | 58% | 62% | 56% |
| | No | 36% | 35% | 36% |

*By Grade Level*

Among kindergarten teachers interviewed, the majority (55%) oppose a reading test or assessment that students must pass before they can be promoted to the next grade.

For grades 1, 2 , 3 and 4 — 60%, 62%, 71% and 60%, respectively, favor requiring a reading test for promotion to the next grade.

**Figure 13**

| | | K | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Question:** | | | | | | |
| Do you think there should be a reading test or reading assessment that a student MUST PASS at your grade level before being promoted to the <u>next</u> grade level? | Yes | 38% | 60% | 62% | 71% | 60% |
| | No | 55% | 37% | 31% | 21% | 35% |
| | Not Applicable | 5% | | | | |

## STUDENTS READING BELOW GRADE LEVEL

***Question:***
***How many students in your class this year are reading below grade level?***

*When teachers were asked the above question, no definition of grade level performance was provided. It is thought, therefore, that this was a criterion-referenced response; i.e., teachers were judging their students' reading performance based on how well these students were reading grade level material.*

Statewide, <u>grade 1-4</u> teachers report that 33% of their students are reading below grade level.



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Among teachers interviewed, a higher percent of below-grade readers is reported in New York City than in Rest of State — 40% and 29%, respectively.

Figure 14

| | Grade | Entire State | New York City | Rest Of State |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Question:** How many students in your class this year are reading below grade level? | Kindergarten | 21% | 21% | 21% |
| | Grades 1-4 | 33% | 40% | 29% |

*By Grade Level*

Among teachers interviewed, the number of their students reading below grade level increases from kindergarten through grade 2 (from 21% to 37%), then stabilizes at 33% in grades 3 and 4.

Figure 15

| | | K | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Question:** How many students in your class this year are reading below grade level? | Entire State | 21% | 29% | 37% | 33% | 33% |
| | New York City | 21% | 34% | 49% | 39% | 39% |
| | Rest of State | 21% | 25% | 30% | 28% | 29% |

## ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

**Question:**
***Referring to students who are reading below grade level, for how many of these students is English a second language?***

Statewide, 22% of the grade 1-4 students who are reading below grade level have English as a second language. The percent reported by New York City teachers is much higher than Rest of State; 34% and 10%, respectively.

Statewide, 21% of the kindergarten students who are reading below grade level have English as a second language. The percent is much higher in New York City compared to Rest of State; 34% and 11% respectively.

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Figure 16

| | Grade | Entire State | New York City | Rest Of State |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Question: (referring to students who are reading below grade level)** For how many of these students is English a second language? | Kindergarten | 21% | 34% | 11% |
| | Grades 1-4 | 22% | 34% | 10% |

## ASSISTANCE OF A READING SPECIALIST

*For Diagnostic Student Assessment:*

Statewide, almost one in four respondents (24%) do not have the assistance of a reading specialist available to them for diagnostic student assessment.

Among teachers interviewed in New York City, this figure is 41%; for Rest of State it is 15%.

*For Direct Student Instruction:*

Statewide, almost one-third of respondents (31%) do not have the assistance of a reading specialist available to them for direct student instruction.

Among teachers interviewed in New York City, this figure is 47%; for Rest of State it is 22%.

*For General Classroom Advice and Consultation*

Statewide, one-fifth of respondents (21%) do not have the assistance of a reading specialist available to them for general classroom advice, consultation on teaching techniques, etc.

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Figure 17

| | | Entire State | New York City | Rest Of State |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Question:** Is the assistance of a reading specialist available... | | | | |
| a. for diagnostic student assessment | Yes | 75% | 58% | 84% |
| | No | 24% | 41% | 15% |
| b. for direct student instruction | Yes | 68% | 52% | 77% |
| | No | 31% | 47% | 22% |
| c. for general classroom advice and consultation on teaching techniques, organization of instructions, etc. | Yes | 78% | 66% | 85% |
| | No | 21% | 33% | 14% |

## FACTORS CONSIDERED CRITICAL IN HELPING ALL STUDENTS LEARN TO READ

***Question:***
***I'm now going to read a list of activities, resources and policies. For each item, please tell me how important you think it is in helping all your students learn to read.***

***Please tell me if you think each item is —***
***Critical (meaning it is essential),***
***Very Important,***
***Somewhat important, or***
***Not very important.***

Statewide, three factors were identified by two-thirds or more of all teacher respondents as critical in helping all students learn to read:

1. Early intervention and remediation for poor readers (79%),
2. Parent involvement in the education of their children (72%), and
3. Reduced class size (66%).

Among teachers interviewed in Rest of State, three factors (in addition to the statewide list above) were considered critical by more than 40% of respondents:

1. Staff development to help the teacher become more proficient in the teaching of reading (47%),
2. A remedial reading pull-out program coordinated with classroom instruction



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(for example, the Reading Recovery program) (45%), and

3. Parent awareness regarding the knowledge and skills their children are learning at your grade level (44%).

Among teachers interviewed in New York City, two factors (in addition to the statewide list above) were considered critical by more than 40% of respondents:

1. Parent awareness regarding the knowledge and skills their children are learning at grade level (50%), and

2. Adult literacy classes for parents of students who are experiencing reading difficulties (42%).

**Figure 18**
**Factors Identified As Critical In Helping All Students Learn To Read**

| | | Entire State | New York City | Rest of State |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Early intervention and remediation for poor readers | 79% | 74% | 81% |
| 2. | Parent involvement in the education of their children | 72% | 73% | 72% |
| 3. | Reduced class size | 66% | 76% | 61% |
| 4. | Parent awareness regarding the knowledge and skills their children are learning at your grade level | 46% | 50% | 44% |
| 5. | Staff development to help *you* become more proficient in the teaching of reading | 41% | 30% | 47% |
| 6. | A remedial reading pull -out program in which a reading specialist coordinates instruction with the classroom teacher and provides additional assistance to your students outside of the classroom (for example, the Reading Recovery program) | 39% | 28% | 45% |
| 7. | Adult literacy classes for parents of your students who are experiencing reading difficulties | 33% | 42% | 28% |
| 8 | The assistance of a certified English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher to help teach students with limited English proficiency | 33% | 27% | 36% |



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## TRAINING IN THE TEACHING OF READING

Statewide, teacher respondents have an average of 20 credit hours of undergraduate or graduate college courses in the teaching of reading. The median is 15 credit hours.

Not counting these courses, 76% of respondents report having had inservice training or professional development in the last 5 years that focused on the teaching of reading. (Among those interviewed in New York City, 81%; in Rest of State, 73%.)

Among these teachers who had inservice training, they average 54 clock-hours of training on the teaching of reading over the last 5 years.



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